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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008

In Today's Papers

AKP Board Discusses Reforms on Monday

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report the AKP board will convene today in order to discuss long-awaited EU reforms and measures to avert a closure case against the AKP. Papers expect the reforms to include Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. However, in order to amend Article 301, the AKP needs the support of the opposition right-wing MHP. Papers speculate if the AKP fails to work out a compromise with the opposition, the AKP will not submit the reforms to referendum.

University Students Clash in Antalya

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report ten students were injured during clashes between right-wing and left-wing student groups at Mediterranean University in Antalya. During the clashes, one student opened fire with his handgun. Police detained 34 students in connection with the clashes.

Mainstream Vatan stresses the current escalation of political tensions in Turkish universities is similar to the environment prior to Turkey's 1980 military coup.

Mainstream Hurriyet reports in a front-page story that a 10-year old boy threw a shrapnel-effect hand grenade in the middle of a street near a mosque in Istanbul's conservative Fatih neighborhood. The grenade did not explode, but the child and his two friends ran away.

Hurriyet reminds that a week ago, a 13-year old child was captured after throwing a Molotov cocktail at the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet building in Istanbul.

TUSIAD: A Strong Political Opposition Absent in Turkey

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report Arzuhan Yalcindag, chairperson of TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Business Professionals' Association), said, "unfortunately, the absence of a strong political opposition in Turkey makes TUSIAD's statements appear political." Yalcindag also said Turkey's terrorism problem cannot be resolved through military

ways alone. She also said the headscarf matter and the secularism debate were mismanaged, which resulted in social and political polarization.

Diyarbakir Business Professionals and NGOs Will Meet President Gul

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report business professionals and NGO representatives from the mainly Kurdish southeastern town of Diyarbakir will meet President Abdullah Gul in Ankara on Wednesday. The Diyarbakir delegation is expected to request a democratic resolution to the Kurdish question. In addition, the delegation is expected to request the completion of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP). The Diyarbakir representatives will meet with political parties in Ankara on Tuesday.

Barzani Abandons the Idea of an 'Independent Kurdistan'
Mainstream Hurriyet reports on its front page that Iraqi Kurdish regional administration leader Massoud Barzani told Voice of Iraq Radio, "The Kurdistan Parliament has decided to live in unity with our Iraqi brothers." Hurriyet cites unnamed sources in Ankara who interpret the remarks to mean "Barzani understands that he must abandon his dream of an independent Kurdistan."

Meanwhile, mainstream Milliyet reports Iraq's Sunni Arabs and Kurds have pledged to cooperate against radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. Milliyet notes Kurdish regional administration leader Massoud Barzani agreed to send Kurdish Peshmerge forces to fight against the Mahdi Army.

Editorial Commentary on the Bush-Putin Summit, Iraq, Turkish Economy

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"The Aftermath of the Two Summits"

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (4/7): "After the NATO Summit and the Bush-Putin Summit, the cold war atmosphere has been replaced by an atmosphere marked by hard bargaining. In this 'give and take' style of negotiation, no one is willing to leave the table. Putin expressed his intense opposition to the missile defense project at the Sochi summit. However, at the same time, the very same Russian administration is considering American offers to eliminate Moscow's anxieties on the project. It seems Russia will not be able to block the missile defense project but will be able to incorporate its demands into it. Both the NATO summit and the recent Sochi summit demonstrate the 'give and take' relationship between the two prominent military powers of the world. The nature of this relationship reaches beyond security concerns into both the energy and economic sectors. The current nature of the U.S.-Russia relationship cannot be understood from the cold-war perspective. This relationship is not about polarization; it is about a struggle to expand cooperation regarding mutual interests."

"Tension Grows in northern Iraq"

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet (4/7): "While we are preoccupied with internal issues, we ignore developments taking place in our backyards. The news coming from northern Iraq is not good because tensions are growing between Kurds and Sunni Arabs. One of the primary reasons for this increase in tension is said to be Kurdish efforts to expel Arabs from northern Iraq. Many of those Arabs who are expelled from northern Iraq wind up joining militant groups and Al-Qaeda. All of this means that northern Iraq is on the verge of a Kurdish-Arab conflict. Meanwhile, the U.S. views northern Iraq as stable and calm. Should conflicts develop between Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi Arabs, attacks against the American military and Kurdish civilian targets could increase. Part of this tension results from prejudice among Arabs that Kurds will try to gain full control over northern Iraq. They also believe Kurds will use the help and support of the Americans in order to gain this territorial control. The clashes in Basra demonstrate Iraq's fragile state. It is now only a matter of time before such clashes spread into northern Iraq. Turkey has to be prepared for any negative impacts of such developments."

"A New IMF Program for Turkey"

Business columnist Erdal Saglam thinks Turkey is in need of another IMF program. He wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (4/7): "Unfortunately, Turkey once again is in need of an IMF program in order to ensure its economic stability. We have to admit the fact that we did not succeed on our own and could not design an economic program compatible with international standards. Turkey has to maintain its economic growth rate; however Turkey does not have its own capital flow and thus has to attract foreign capital. We abandoned economic reforms and failed to pursue fiscal discipline. Moreover, the government introduced new legislation which accelerates public spending and destroys budgetary discipline. Political tensions and polarization have dealt a serious blow against social consensus. In the midst of this, Turkey has avoided fiscal discipline outlined by the IMF. In addition, Turkey has avoided EU harmonization for the last three years. Let's admit it; this was serious mismanagement. At this point, there is a need for a new IMF program for Turkey."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- On Sunday, more than 70 labor unions and NGOs staged rallies in Istanbul to protest social security reforms.
- Prime Minister Erdogan said those who failed to defeat the AKP in the ballot box are now trying different methods to oust the party from Turkish politics.

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- Four candidates will run for the CHP party chairmanship at the party's July 22nd convention.

International News

- Afghan President Hamid Karzai signaled he will run for president again next year.
- Iran's parliamentary speaker called on Muslim nations to boycott Dutch products. This call comes in response to the recent film entitled, "Fitna," which was made by a right-wing Dutch lawmaker and accuses the Koran of inciting violence.
- Thirty protesters were arrested during demonstrations against the procession of the Olympic torch through London on its way to the games in Beijing.

WILSON